

Message Text

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FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OCOM, MILI, NATO, FR

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SUBJECT: AIRBORNE WARNING AND CONTROL SYSTEM (AWACS)

REF: STATE 268529 (DTG 122335Z NOV 75)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: FRENCH WANT AWACS, BUT ARE NOT LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN NATO PROGRAM UNLESS THEY GET A MUCH BETTER OFFSET DEAL. OUR BEST AMMUNITION WITH FRENCH IS CONCRETE ECONOMIC SWEETENING OF OFFER, NOT MORE RHETORIC ON VIRTUES OF AWACS. END SUMMARY.

2. BACKGROUND:

I RECOGNIZE THAT WE MAY NOT HAVE ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO USG CONCERNING PAST EXCHANGES WITH GOF ON AWACS. FOLLOWING ANALYSIS IS BASED LARGELY ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US IN PARIS AND FROM US NATO REPORTING. I BELIEVE THAT QUESTION OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN NATO AWACS PROGRAM IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE -- BOTH TO U.S. AND TO FRANCE -- FROM POINTS OF VIEW OF ENHANCING FRANCE'S (AND THUS NATO'S) MILITARY POSTURE, AND OF ESTABLISHING EARLY SUCCESS STORY FOR NATO STANDARDIZATION THAT WILL DEMONSTRATE TO FRENCH AS WELL AS TO OTHERS IN NATO/EUROPE HOW GENERAL CONCEPT OF STANDARDIZATION CAN BE TRANSLATED INTO HARDWARE PROGRAM THAT SERVES THE COMMON POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY INTERESTS OF ALL THE ALLIES. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS DISCUSS OUR VIEW OF CURRENT FRENCH ATTITUDES ON AWACS AND RECOMMEND NEW INITIATIVES TOWARD SECURING FULL FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN NATO AWACS PROGRAM.

3. MILITARY ADVANTAGES:

FRENCH ARE FULLY AWARE OF LONG LIST OF MILITARY ADVANTAGES THAT ACCRUE TO NATIONS DEPLOYING AWACS CAPABILITY. MOREOVER, FRENCH MILITARY SEE TWO ADVANTAGES OF AWACS THAT ARE UNIQUE TO FRENCH NEEDS: FIRST, AWACS CAN PROVIDE ENHANCED SURVIVABILITY TO FRENCH AIR-DELIVERED AND PLUTON TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND TO FRENCH IRBMS, MIRAGE IVS AND SSBN HOME PORT FACILITIES THROUGH ITS IMPROVED EARLY WARNING CAPABILITIES. SECOND, GISCARD'S DECISION TO MOVE FRANCE'S TWO AIRCRAFT

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CARRIERS -- AND NUMEROUS SUPPORTING SHIPS -- TO THE MEDITERRANEAN WILL REQUIRE AN UPGRADED EARLY WARNING CAPABILITY TO MEET THE UNIQUELY INHOSPITABLE ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT PRESENTED BY THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN; AWACS CAN PERFORM THIS MISSION. THUS, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF MILITARY ADVANTAGES, THE FRENCH DO NOT NEED TO BE SOLD ON AWACS; THEY UNDERSTAND FULL WELL WHAT AWACS CAN DO FOR THEM.

4. POLITICAL ASPECTS:

MOD OFFICIALS TELL US THAT THE FACT THAT FRANCE DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN NATO'S INTEGRATED COMMAND NEED NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN A NATO AWACS SYSTEM. WHILE NADGE AND AWACS ARE NOT EXACTLY THE SAME, THEY ARE ROUGHLY ANALOGOUS IN POLITICAL TERMS. FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN NADGE, THEREFORE, SETS A STRONG PRECEDENT THAT WOULD PERMIT FRANCE ALSO TO PARTICIPATE IN NATO AWACS WITHOUT COMPROMISING ITS "INDEPENDENCE." IT IS MY JUDGMENT THAT GISCARD COULD HANDLE FORESEEABLE DOMESTIC POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO A FRENCH ROLE IN NATO AWACS IF HE CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT FRANCE IS GETTING

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SOMETHING CONCRETE IN RETURN. EFFORTS BY SOME OF
FRANCE'S ALLIES TO USE AWACS SUBJECT AS OPPORTUNITY TO
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SHOEHORN FRANCE BACK INTO DE FACTO NATO INTEGRATION, HOWEVER
MIGHT GENERATE A FRENCH REACTION SEEKING TO PROTECT GOF
"INDEPENDENCE" AND, IN THE PROCESS, UNDERMINE HOPE OF
OBTAINING PARTICIPATION IN NATO AWACS.
I RAISE THIS POINT ONLY BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT
SOME OFFICIAL SOURCES IN THE UK ATTACH MAJOR IMPORTANCE
TO THE "POLITICAL" GOAL OF OBTAINING GREATER FRENCH
PARTICIPATION IN NATO THROUGH FRENCH ROLE IN NATO AWACS.
WHILE THIS GOAL IS CERTAINLY LAUDABLE, SUCH MEANS MAY
DO MORE TO FRUSTRATE IT THAN TO ATTAIN IT.

5. OPERATIONAL ASPECTS:

ALTHOUGH FRENCH MILITARY OFFICIALS SEEM TO HAVE NO
MAJOR DIFFICULTIES WITH SUBJECT OF AWACS SURVIVABILITY,
SOME MOD OFFICIALS HAVE DOUBTS ON THIS SCORE.

6. PRICE:

FRENCH COST ANALYSIS OF AWACS PROGRAM IS BASED
UPON AN ASSUMED PRICE OF ABOUT \$55 MILLION PER AIRCRAFT
AND A TOTAL FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF
\$300 MILLION. IT MAY VERY WELL BE THAT THIS SUBSTANTIAL
INVESTMENT WOULD BE MORE THAN OFFSET BY THE ENHANCED
CAPABILITIES THAT AWACS WILL DELIVER. NEVERTHELESS, THE
FRENCH DEFENSE BUDGET -- RUNNING AT ABOUT \$12 BILLION
FOR 1976 -- IS INSUFFICIENT TO MEET MANY OF THE PRIORITY
REQUIREMENTS ALREADY ESTABLISHED BY BOTH THE POLITICAL
AND THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN FRANCE. THE NEXT FIVE
YEARS SHOULD SEE SUBSTANTIAL OUTLAYS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
AND PURCHASE OF NEW EQUIPMENT OTHER THAN THE AWACS. A
NEW FIGHTER AIRCRAFT, NEW SUBMARINES, NEW GROUND AND AIR

TRANSPORT ARE ONLY A FEW OF THE EXAMPLES OF EXPENSIVE PROGRAMS WHICH HAVE HIGHER CURRENT PRIORITIES THAN AWACS. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS REASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT PERSONNEL EXPENSES WILL CONTINUE TO ABSORB A MAJOR AND PERHAPS GROWING PORTION OF THE DEFENSE BUDGET. IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE DISPARITY BETWEEN DEFENSE BUDGET ENDS AND MEANS THAT THE FUTURE OF THE FRENCH DEFENSE BUDGET HAS COME UNDER INTENSE SCRUTINY AND INCREASED PUBLIC DEBATE. THE THOUGHT OF ADDING YET CONFIDENTIAL

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ANOTHER MULTI-HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR PROGRAM TO A BUDGET "ENVELOPE" THAT IS INSUFFICIENT TO MEET ALREADY DEFINED PRIORITIES IS NOT ATTRACTIVE FROM THE STRICTLY FINANCIAL POINT OF VIEW. COST CONSIDERATIONS, THEREFORE, ARE THE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO FRANCE'S PARTICIPATION IN AWACS, AND THE FRENCH ARE MORE LIKELY TO PARTICIPATE IF THE COST OF AWACS CAN BE OFFSET IN AN ECONOMICALLY ATTRACTIVE FASHION.

7. DIRECT OFFSETS:

THE FRENCH ASK "WHAT DOES FRANCE GET IN RETURN FOR PARTICIPATING IN AWACS?" WE ARE NOW TALKING ABOUT AN OFFSET ARRANGEMENT THAT WILL PERMIT THE FRENCH TO RECOUP ONLY SOMETHING LIKE 25-30 PERCENT OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO NATO AWACS. THIS SIMPLY IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH. UNLESS THE OFFSET FORMULA IS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED, I SEE LITTLE CHANCE THAT FRANCE WILL PARTICIPATE FULLY IN NATO AWACS. COMPARED TO THE MUCH LARGER OFFSET WHICH EVENTUALLY FORMED A PART OF THE F-16 PACKAGE, THE CURRENT AWACS OFFSET PROPOSAL SEEMS MISERLY INDEED WHEN VIEWED FROM THE FRENCH PERSPECTIVE. THE FRENCH HAVE PROPOSED SEVERAL WAYS OF AUGMENTING THE OFFSET. FIRST, THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE CFM-56 ENGINE ADOPTED AS THE STANDARD ENGINE FOR NATO AWACS. SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD PROVIDE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE FOR THE CFM-56 AND WOULD ALSO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE POSSIBLE WIDE APPLICATION OF THE CFM-56 TO OTHER AIRCRAFT. WHILE USE OF THE CFM-56 WOULD INCREASE THE COST OF EACH AWACS AIRCRAFT, BOEING HAS INFORMED US THAT IT WOULD CUT OPERATING COSTS OF AWACS AND, BECAUSE OF THE INCREASED LOITER TIME THAT WOULD ACCRUE TO CFM-56 EQUIPPED AWACS, MIGHT RESULT IN THE SAME CAPABILITY BEING OBTAINED FROM A FORCE SMALLER BY TWO AIRCRAFT. SECOND, THE FRENCH HAVE PRESENTED US WITH A LIST OF FRENCH MILITARY EQUIPMENT (E.G., GAZELLE HELICOPTERS) WHICH COULD BE PURCHASED TO MEET US EQUIPMENT NEEDS AND TO OFFSET FRENCH COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH NATO AWACS (COPIES POUCHED EUR/WE AND OSD/ISA). THERE ARE, OF COURSE, OTHER WAYS OF CREATING OFFSET

PACKAGES THAT MIGHT BE ATTRACTIVE TO THE GOF. IN ANY

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EVENT, THE KEY TO FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN NATO AWACS
IS MORE LIKELY TO BE FOUND IN OFFSET ARRANGEMENTS THAN
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ANYWHERE ELSE.

8. FRENCH NEGOTIATING POSITION:

UHILE THE FRENCH WOULD LIKE TO HAVE AWACS, THEY
BELIEVE THAT THE US WANTS AWACS EVEN MORE AND THAT THIS
GIVES THEM ADDED LEVERAGE IN DRIVING THE BEST POSSIBLE
BARGAIN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF FRENCH INDUSTRIAL
RETURNS. THE FRENCH REASON THAT ONLY THE GERMANS ARE
LIKELY TO HAVE A FIRM EUROPEAN COMMITMENT TO A NATO
AWACS SYSTEM, ALTHOUGH EVEN THE GERMAN COMMITMENT SHOWS
SOME SPONGINESS. THE BRITISH COMMITMENT IS CONSIDERABLY
LESS FIRM (REASON THE FRENCH) AND THE OTHER, SMALLER
NATO COUNTRIES, DON'T REALLY COUNT. CONSEQUENTLY, THE
GERMANS ALONE WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO HOLD UP THE
EUROPEAN END OF A NATO AWACS SYSTEM, AND FRENCH PARTICI-
PATION IS PRACTICALLY INDISPENSABLE IF THERE IS TO BE A
NATO AWACS. MOREOVER, THE FRENCH REALIZE THAT THE
AMERICAN CONGRESS IS WATCHING FOR A SIGNAL THAT THE
EUROPEANS BELIEVE IN THE AWACS CONCEPT SUFFICIENTLY TO
PAY FOR IT. THEY FEEL THAT IF THE EUROPEANS DO NOT GIVE
THIS EVIDENCE OF FAITH, THE US AWACS MAY BE BROUGHT INTO
QUESTION AND THE WHOLE PROGRAM ON BOTH SIDES OF THE
ATLANTIC COULD COLLAPSE. WHILE THE FRENCH MAY EXAGGERATE
THE STRENGTH OF THEIR NEGOTIATING POSITION BASED ON THESE
CONSIDERATIONS, NEVERTHELESS THEY FEEL THAT THEIR PARTI-
CIPATION IS KEY TO THE UNITED STATES AND THAT THE UNITED
STATES SHOULD BE PREPARED TO PAY AN "EQUITABLE" AMOUNT
TO SECURE FRENCH PARTICIPATION.

9. RECOMMENDATION:

FIRST, IN FUTURE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FRENCH --
PARTICULARLY AT THE MOD LEVEL -- THE USG SHOULD CONTINUE
ITS EFFORTS TO REINFORCE ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING AWACS
SURVIVABILITY. SECOND, WE WILL, OF COURSE, DRAW ON
INFORMATION IN REFTEL IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FRENCH.
BUT THAT SORT OF RHETORIC IS NOT WHAT IS NEEDED TO
OBTAIN FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN AWACS. WHAT WE NEED IS

AN ATTRACTIVE OFFSET PROGRAM THAT WILL BE PRESENTED TO
THE FRENCH AT A SUFFICIENTLY HIGH POLICY LEVEL SO THAT
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THE FRENCH ARE LEFT IN NO DOUBT ABOUT OUR ABILITY AND
INTENTION TO DELIVER WHAT WE PROMISE. WITH THAT IN
MIND, WASHINGTON MAY WISH TO CONSIDER DISPATCHING A HIGH
LEVEL NEGOTIATING TEAM, CONSISTING OF SENIOR DOD AND
STATE REPS EMPOWERED TO REACH AN EARLY "EQUITABLE"
ARRANGEMENT WITH THE FRENCH ON OFFSETS. THIRD, WASHING-
TON SHOULD EXAMINE THE IDEA OF ADOPTING THE CFM-56
ENGINE FOR AWACS AND/OR PURCHASING FRENCH EQUIPMENT IN
SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES AS ELEMENTS IN PROVIDING A SATIS-
FACTORY OFFSET. IN THE ABSENCE OF A MORE FORTHCOMING
ATTITUDE BY THE US, ALL THE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE SUGGESTS
THAT THE GOF IS NOT LIKELY TO JOIN THE AWACS PROGRAM.
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